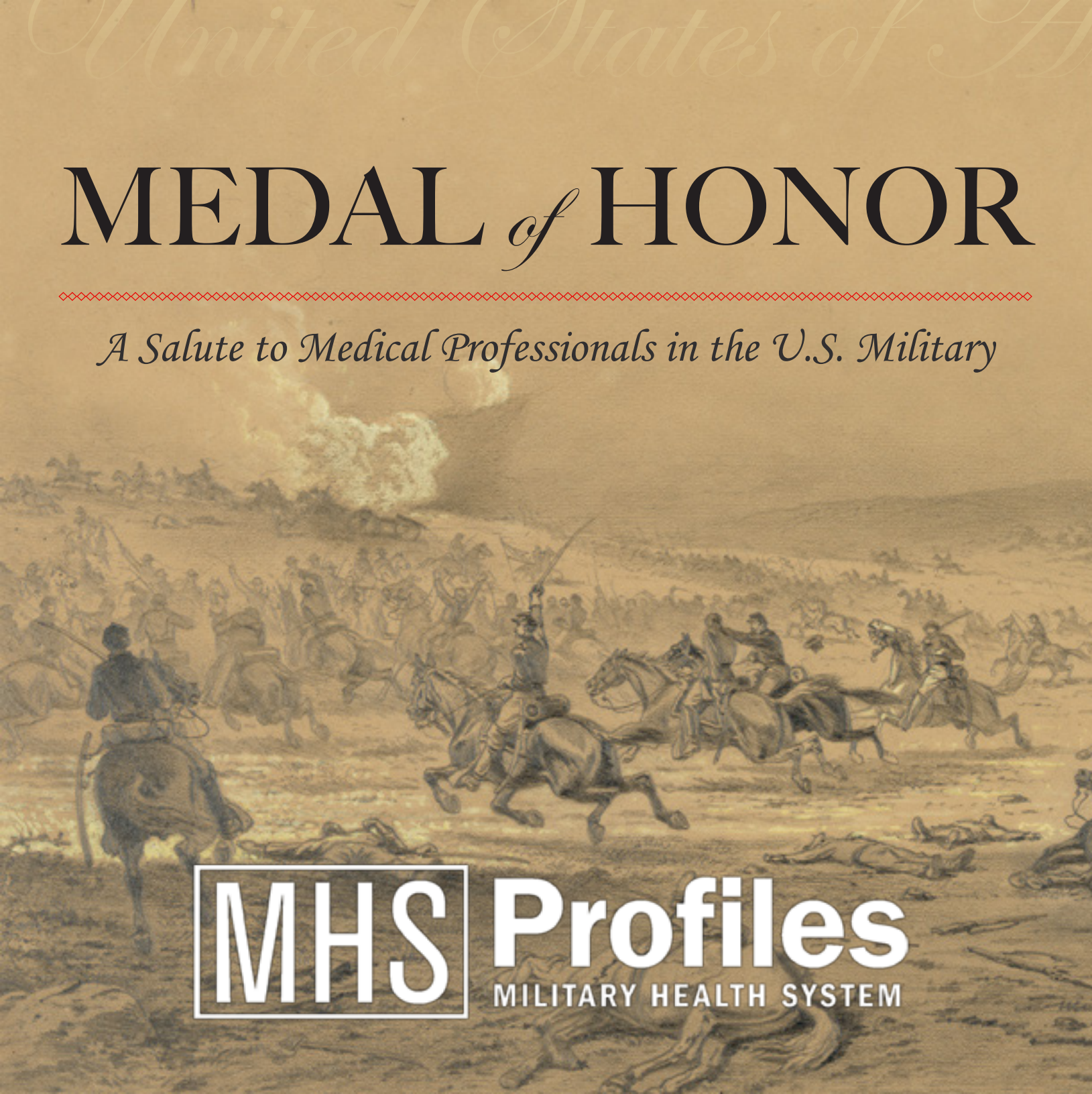
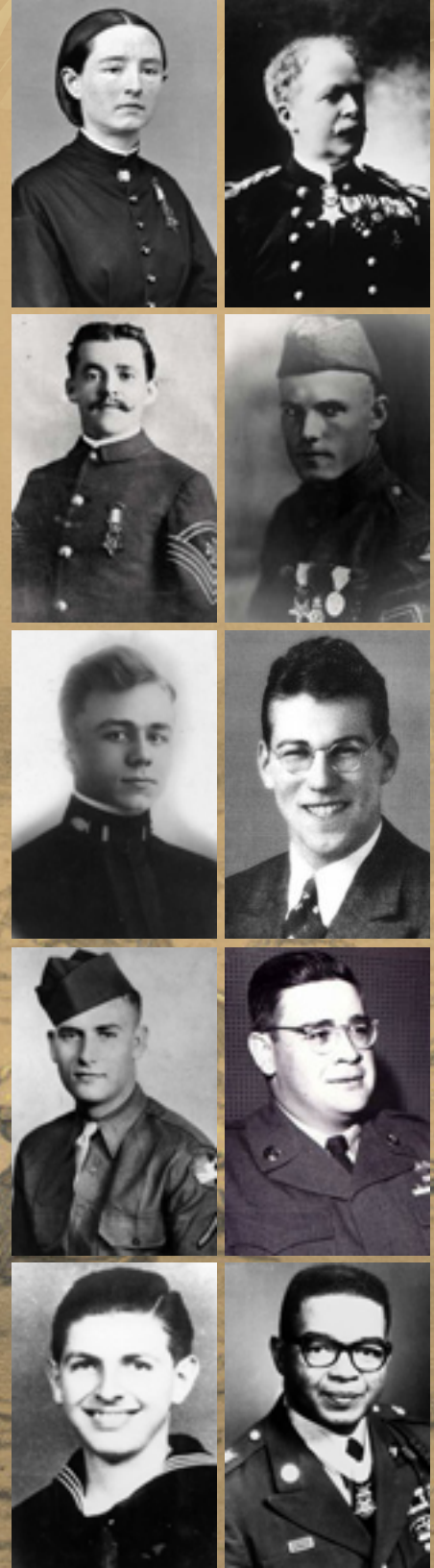


# MEDAL *of* HONOR

*A Salute to Medical Professionals in the U.S. Military*

**MHS** Profiles  
MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM





# *A Salute to Medical Medal of Honor Winners*

“Few Americans ever see their service, but all Americans are safer because of it. And our hearts swell with pride just hearing their names,” President Barack Obama at the Oct. 6, 2010 presentation of the Medal of Honor to Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller, posthumously.



*President Barack Obama presented Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller's parents with their son's posthumous Medal of Honor, the military's highest honor Oct 6, 2010.*

As the United States' highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor is the ultimate recognition for service members who have acted extraordinarily under the most difficult of circumstances. Federal bill S.J.R. No. 82 states the Medal of Honor is reserved for those who are distinguished, “by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States.” The bill was signed into law on Dec. 21, 1861. Since that time the Medal has been bestowed on 3,448 men and one woman. Many of these brave individuals have served not only their country, but their comrades as medical professionals in the United States military.

“It has been nearly 150 years since our nation first presented this Medal for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of life and above and beyond the call of duty. And in those nearly 150 years – through civil war and two world wars, Korea and Vietnam, Desert Storm and Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, and countless battles in between – tens of millions of Americans have worn the uniform. But fewer than 3,500 have been recognized with the Medal of Honor,” Commander In Chief Obama said at the presentation of the Medal to Army Sergeant 1st Class Jared C. Monti, posthumously.

Medical service members who have received the Medal of Honor have distinguished themselves as not only care givers and healers, but as warriors. When all else failed, medical personnel have done what was necessary to relieve the pain



*Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates addresses the audience during a Medal of Honor ceremony for Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller at the Pentagon, Oct. 7, 2010. President Barack Obama posthumously awarded Miller the nation's highest honor for his heroic actions on Jan. 25, 2008, in Afghanistan where Miller sacrificed his life to save the lives of his teammates and 15 Afghan soldiers.*



and suffering surrounding them. Whether the young sailor who took a grenade in each hand and thrust them into the chest of the enemy or the woman who wouldn't take no for an answer and persisted in caring for wounded troops, medical Medal of Honor recipients have earned the status of American heroes.

"Every American is safer because of their service. And every American has a duty to remember and honor their sacrifice. If we do – if we keep their legacy alive, if we keep faith with the freedoms they died to defend – then we can imagine a day, decades from now, when

another child sits down at his desk, ponders the true meaning of heroism and finds inspiration in the story of a soldier. That is the meaning of this Medal, and that is our summons today, as a proud and grateful nation," President Obama said at the presentation of the Medal of Honor to Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller, posthumously.

This month, as the country pauses to remember its heroes on Veteran's Day, the Military Health System honors those warrior-healers who acted above and beyond the call of duty to care for their fellow troops and to ensure the freedom of all Americans.



# CIVIL WAR

## *Mary E. Walker, Contract Acting Assistant Surgeon (civilian), U. S. Army*

Dr. Mary E. Walker is the only woman to have received the Medal of Honor. Born in 1832, she graduated from Syracuse Medical College as the only female in her class in 1855. At the start of the Civil War in 1861, Walker, then 29 years old, applied for an appointment as an Army surgeon and was rejected. However, Walker stayed in Washington serving as an unpaid volunteer in various camps. She later filled in as an assistant surgeon, also without pay.

In 1862, Walker presented herself at the Virginia headquarters of Army Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside and was taken on as a field surgeon, although still on a volunteer basis. She treated the wounded at Warrenton and in Fredericksburg in December 1862. Almost a year later, she was in Chattanooga, Tenn. tending the casualties of the battle of Chickamauga. After the battle, she again requested a commission as an Army doctor. In September 1863, Army Maj. General George H. Thomas appointed her as an assistant surgeon in the Army of the Cumberland, assigning her to the 52nd Ohio Regiment.



*Wounded soldiers in hospital, ca. 1860 - ca. 1865*

*Surgeons of Harewood Hospital, Washington, D.C., ca. 1860 - ca. 1865*







*Camp Hamilton, Kentucky. Division Hospital, diet kitchen. [Group photograph of hospital staff]*

In April 1864, Walker was captured by Confederate troops, having remained behind to tend wounded Union service members. Charged with being a spy and arrested, her male attire constituting the principle evidence against her, Dr. Walker spent four months in various prisons, subject to much abuse for her unladylike occupation and attire, until she was exchanged for a Confederate surgeon in August 1864.

In October of the same year, Walker was granted a contract as an acting assistant surgeon. Despite her requests for battlefield duty, she was not again sent into the field. She spent the rest of the war as superintendent of a Louisville, Ky. female prison hospital and a Clarksville, Tenn. orphanage.

On Nov. 11, 1865, President Andrew Johnson signed a bill to present Mary Edwards Walker with the Medal of Honor for meritorious service, to recognize her contributions to the war effort without awarding her an army commission.

In 1916, Congress revised the Medal of Honor standards to include only actual combat with an enemy. Several months later, in 1917, the Board of Medal Awards revoked Walker's medal.

Walker died in 1919 at the age of 86. Nearly 60 years after her death the Army Board for Correction of Military Records reviewed the case. In 1977, Army Secretary Clifford L. Alexander approved the board's recommendation to restore the Medal of Honor to Walker.

Her citation reads, "Faithfully served as contract surgeon in the service of the United States, and has devoted herself with much patriotic zeal to the sick and wounded soldiers, both in the field and hospitals, to the detriment of her own health, and has also endured hardships as a prisoner of war four months in a Southern prison while acting as contract surgeon."



# INDIAN WARS

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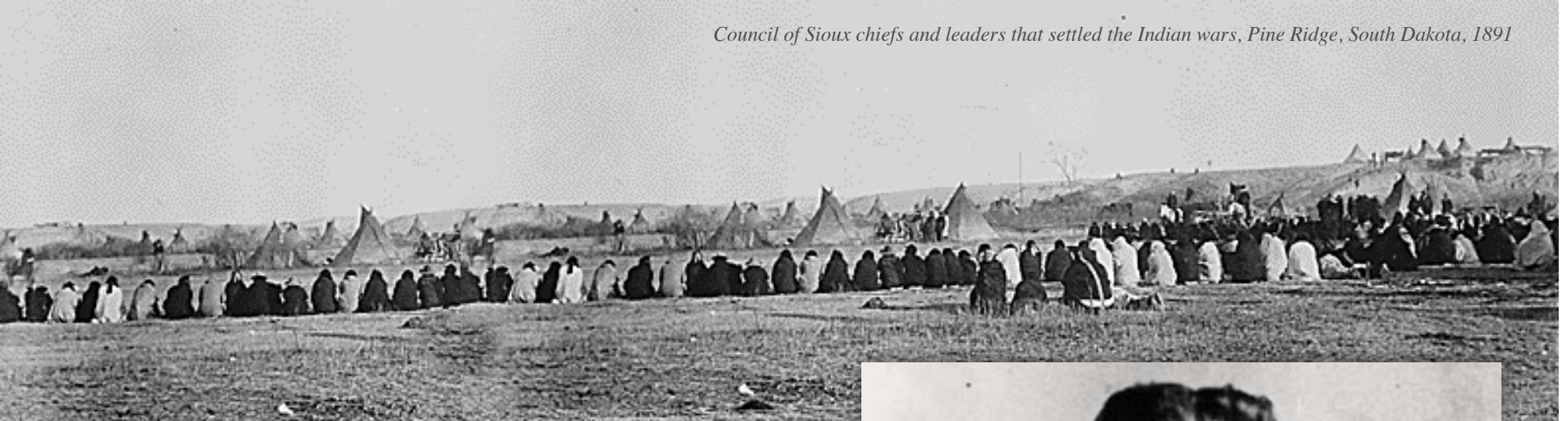
## *Army Assistant Surgeon Bernard J.D. Irwin*

Army Assistant Surgeon Bernard Irwin was the first recipient of the Medal of Honor. During the Indian Wars, Irwin served as an assistant surgeon in the Army, and was credited with performing the first surgery in the state of Arizona in addition to inventing the first tent hospital during the Civil War. Reportedly an exceptional commander, Irwin, along with 14 other men, volunteered to rescue 2nd Lt. George Bascom and 60 other men of the 7th Infantry who were trapped in Chiricahua Apache territory.

Irwin and his men embarked on a 100-mile march on mules, as there were no horses for them to ride. After engaging in battle with Indians along the way, Irwin managed to take prisoners, and recover stolen horses and cattle. Although Irwin's bravery in this conflict was the earliest Medal of Honor action, it would be 30 years before he would officially be decorated with the distinguished Medal in 1894.

Irwin's citation reads, "Voluntarily took command of troops and attacked and defeated hostile Indians he met on the way. Surgeon Irwin volunteered to go to the rescue of 2d Lt. George N. Bascom, 7th Infantry, who with 60 men was trapped by Chiricahua Apaches under Cochise."





### ***Army Pvt. Oscar Burkard***

Army Private Oscar Burkard was a German-American soldier who participated in one of the first battles of the Indian Wars and was the last person during the campaign to be awarded the Medal of Honor.

Born in Achern, Germany, Burkard immigrated to the United States in 1895 and later enlisted in the Army where he was assigned to the 3rd U.S. Infantry. During the Battle of Sugar Point, the war's final battle, Burkard was acting hospital steward with the Hospital Corps. In the midst of the battle, Burkard rescued several soldiers while under heavy fire and fearlessly continued to do so throughout the day against the uprising Chippewa Indians.

Burkard was awarded the Medal on Aug. 21, 1899 for his actions throughout the battle.

His citation reads, "For distinguished bravery in action against hostile Indians."



# WWI

## *Army Pfc. Charles D. Barger*

Army Private First Class Charles Barger of Missouri served as a stretcher bearer in the U.S. Army, Company L, 354th Infantry, 89th Division during World War I. When the division was near Bois-de-Bantheville, France several patrols were sent into “No Man’s Land,” which was the ground between the two opposing trenches that contained barbed wire and exposed inhabitants to sniper bullets and enemy explosives. Unusually, the patrols were sent out during daylight, rather than waiting for cover of darkness. Two patrols from Barger’s regiment were pinned down by heavy rifle and machine gun fire. 2nd Lt. John M. Millis was seriously wounded and ordered his men to leave without him. One man managed to crawl to the safety of the Allied lines and brought news that Millis and another wounded officer were trapped in no man’s land.

Upon hearing this, Barger and another stretcher bearer, Pfc. Jesse N. Funk, voluntarily ran 500 yards through heavy machine gun fire with their stretcher and rescued Millis. They then returned to no man’s land and rescued the other officer, 1st Lt. Ernest G. Rowell. For these actions, both Barger and Funk were awarded the Medal of Honor. Theirs were the only Medals of Honor received by Army medical personnel in World War I. Barger was awarded numerous





other decorations for his service in the war, including the Distinguished Service Cross, the Bronze Star, 10 Purple Hearts, and a number of foreign decorations such as the Médaille militaire and Croix de Guerre from France and the Croce di Guerra from Italy.

Barger's citation reads, "Learning that two daylight patrols had been caught out in No Man's Land and were unable to return, Pfc. Barger and another stretcher bearer upon their own initiative made two trips 500 yards beyond our lines, under constant machinegun fire, and rescued two wounded officers."



### *Navy Lt. j.g. Weedon Osborne*

A Chicago native, Weedon Osborne was appointed a U.S. Navy Dental Surgeon with the rank of lieutenant, junior grade, in 1917 and was assigned duty with the 6th Marine Regiment. Osborne was serving in the front line first aid party in May 1918 while waiting for his dental appointment. As Marines advanced on the town of Bouresche, during the Battle of Belleau Wood on June 6, 1918, Osborne threw himself zealously into the work of rescuing the wounded. In his attempt to carry Capt. Donald Duncan to safety,

an artillery shell killed both men. Osborne was the first commissioned U.S. naval officer killed on land in World War I, and the only Medical Corps officer to die in battle in that war. Osborne's Medal of Honor, a rare "Tiffany Cross" version, is held by the U.S. Navy Museum in Washington, D.C.

His citation reads, "In the hottest of the fighting when the marines made their famous advance on Bouresche at the southern edge of Belleau Wood, Lt (j.g.). Osborne threw himself zealously into the work of rescuing the wounded. Extremely courageous in the performance of this perilous task, he was killed while carrying a wounded officer to a place of safety."



*Surgical patients. Base hospital, Camp Joseph E. Johnston, Florida., ca. 1918*



# WWII



## *Army Capt. Ben Salomon*

Ben Salomon was a practicing dentist when he was drafted into the U.S. Army shortly after the National Selective Service Act became effective in 1940, during World War II. He entered the military as an infantry private and quickly excelled in his military training, being placed as the regimental dental officer of the 2nd Battalion, 105th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Division.

Salomon, the only dentist to receive the Medal of Honor to date, received the distinction for his sacrifice in battling Japanese forces at Saipan. He was first recommended for the Medal of Honor by Army Capt. Edmund G. Love, the 27th Division historian, but it was denied because he was considered ineligible as a member of military medical personnel. It wasn't until May 1, 2002, more than a half-century following the war, that he was finally awarded with the honor.





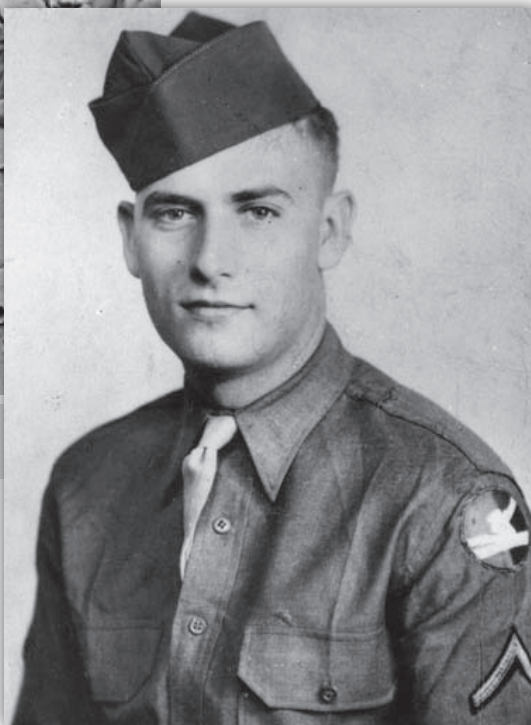


*United States Army Nurse flies with wounded service members, 1942 - 1945*

Salomon's citation reads, "Realizing the gravity of the situation, Captain Salomon ordered the wounded to make their way as best they could back to the regimental aid station, while he attempted to hold off the enemy until they were clear. Captain Salomon then grabbed a rifle from one of the wounded and rushed out of the tent. After four men were killed while manning a machine gun, Captain Salomon took control of it. When his body was later found, 98 dead enemy soldiers were piled in front of his position."

### ***Army Pvt. William McGee***

William McGee, born and raised in Indianapolis, entered the Army in Indiana and served with the Medical Detachment of the 304th Infantry, 76th Division. The Medal of Honor was awarded to him for his actions near Mulheim, Germany, on March 18, 1945.



After two of his fellow service members detonated mines which grievously wounded them, McGee entered the minefield and carried one of them to safety. He then returned to rescue the second man, but stepped on a mine and was himself mortally wounded. He ordered his fellow soldiers to stay out of the minefield and not risk their safety by trying to rescue him. McGee died of his injuries the next day.

McGee's citation reads, "Although suffering intensely and bleeding profusely, he shouted orders that none of his comrades was to risk his life by entering the death-sown field to render first aid that might have saved his life. In making the supreme sacrifice, Pvt. demonstrated a concern for the well-being of his fellow soldiers that transcended all considerations for his own safety and a gallantry in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service."



# KOREA



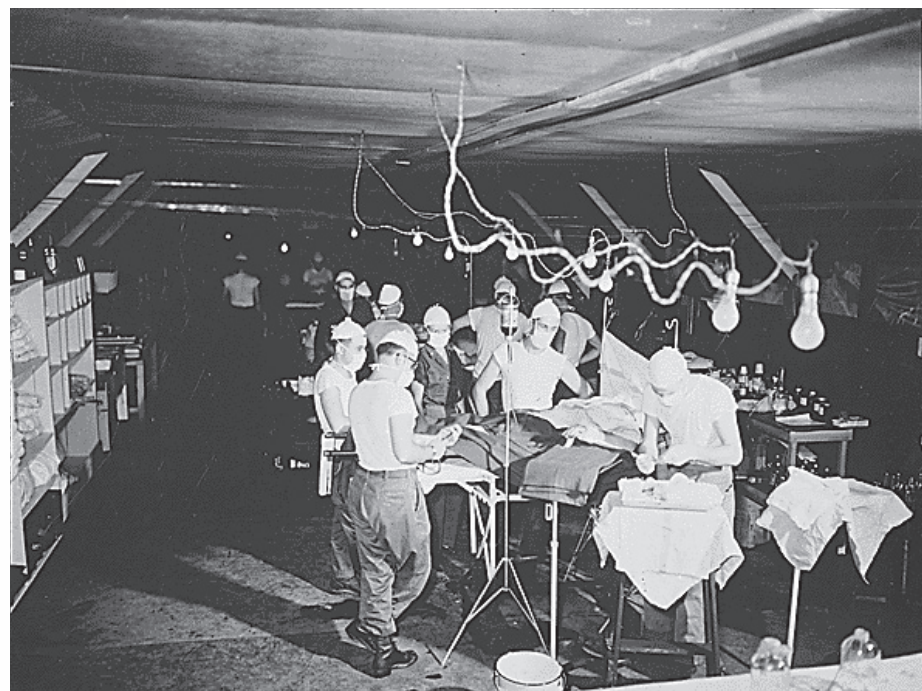
*Army Sgt. David Bleak*

Born in Idaho Falls, Idaho, David Bleak was raised on a farm on the outskirts of the city, and worked as a rancher and railroad constructor. Bleak chose to work over attending school, dropped out of high school and later joined the Army in 1950. Selected for medical duty, Bleak was shipped to Korea and served with the Medical Company 223d Infantry Regiment, 40th Infantry Division. He stood over six feet tall and weighed 250 pounds, and it was his sheer strength and audacious courage that saved the lives of his fellow soldiers on June 14, 1952, near Minari-gol, Korea. He was presented the Medal of Honor by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in October 1953.

After the war he lived in Wyoming and held various jobs, including rancher, butcher and truck driver. He eventually became a janitor at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory,

where he worked until his retirement in the mid-1990s. He died March 23, 2006.

Bleak's citation reads, "Nearing the military crest of the hill, while attempting to cross the fire-swept area to attend the wounded, he came under hostile fire from a small group of the enemy concealed in a trench. Entering the trench he closed with the enemy, killed 2 with bare hands and a third with his trench knife. Moving from the emplacement, he saw a concussion grenade fall in front of a companion and, quickly shifting his position, shielded the man from the impact of the blast."



*An operation is performed on a wounded soldier at the 8209th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, twenty miles from the front lines., 1952*





*Army medics carry wounded UN personnel to waiting ambulances, after the patients' arrival at this Tokyo base in the U.S. Air Force C-124 in the background. 1952*

### ***Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Edward Benfold***

Petty Officer 3rd Class Edward "Ted" Benfold was 18 when he joined the U.S. Navy as a hospital corpsman on June 27, 1949. His training began at the Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Ill., where he remained until December 1949. In August 1950 he reported for a four-month course in neuropsychiatric nursing technique at the Naval Hospital in Philadelphia, graduating as a neuropsychiatry technician.

Benfold had ample opportunity to put his training into practice in Korea on the night of Sept. 4, 1952. The Chinese attacked every Marine position on

"Bunker Hill" without letup. In search of casualties, he found two wounded Marines lying in a large crater. Before he could administer aid, two enemy soldiers approached the shell hole and tossed two grenades into it. Benfold rushed to the crater, jumped into it and picked up both grenades. He leaped out and pushed a grenade to the chest of each soldier. The grenades exploded, killing the two Chinese and Benfold, but the lives of his two patients were saved.

The U.S.S. Benfold, the Navy's 15th guided missile destroyer is named in honor of Petty Officer Benfold.

*Benfold's citation reads, "Picking up a grenade in each hand, Petty Officer Benfold leaped out of the crater and hurled himself against the onrushing hostile soldier, pushing the grenades against their chest and killing both the attackers."*



*Vietnam. Private First Class David Sletten, medic, Company B, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, paddles a three-man assault boat down the canal toward a breaking point during Operation Tong Thang I., 1968*

# VIETNAM

## *Army Sp6c. Lawrence Joel*

A native of Winston-Salem, N.C., Lawrence Joel joined the Merchant Marines, which were responsible for transporting cargo and passengers during peace time as an auxiliary to the Navy, for one year and then enlisted into the U.S. Army at the age of 18. As a medic with the 1st Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade, Spc. 5th Class Lawrence Joel became the first African-American since the Spanish-American War of 1898, to be awarded the Medal of Honor.

Joel received the award for his heroic actions on Nov. 8, 1965, in the area known as the Iron Triangle, an enemy stronghold in northwest Saigon. Joel and his battalion of paratroopers were sent on a patrol for Viet Cong soldiers near Bien Hoa, warzone "D" in the heart of Vietnam, conducting Operation Hump. Joel and his battalion shortly found themselves in a Viet Cong ambush, outnumbered six to one. Under heavy gunfire, Joel did his duty as a medic, administering first aid to wounded





*Navy Nurses. Lieutenant Commander Dorothy Ryan checks the medical chart of Marine Corporal Roy Hadaway of Calera, Alabama aboard the hospital ship USS Repose off South Vietnam. Miss Ryan, from Bronx, New York is one of 29 nurses aboard the hospital ship selected from 500 volunteers of the Navy Nurse Corps., 1966*

soldiers. Joel defied orders to stay close to the ground and risked his life to help the many wounded soldiers; nearly every soldier in the lead squad was either wounded or killed in the battle. Even after being shot twice, Joel continued to do his job; he bandaged his wounds and continued to help the wounded in his unit and in the nearby company as well. When his medical supplies were depleted, he hobbled around the battlefield for more, using a makeshift crutch. Joel attended to 13 troops and saved the life of one soldier who suffered from a severe chest wound by improvising and placing a plastic bag over the soldier's chest to seal the wound until the supplies were refreshed. After the firefight, which lasted over twenty four hours, Joel was hospitalized and shipped out of country to recover.

Joel served in the Korean War and Vietnam before retiring in 1973. On March 9, 1967 on the White House lawn, President Lyndon Johnson presented Joel with the Medal of Honor for his service in Vietnam. The Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum was dedicated in his name, and opened in his hometown in 1989. There are also two U.S. Army clinics and an auditorium at Walter Reed Army Medical Center at Fort Bragg, N.C. named in his honor.

Joel's citation reads, "Completely ignoring the warnings of others, and his pain, he continued his search for wounded, exposing himself to hostile fire; and, as bullets dug up the dirt around him, he held plasma bottles high while kneeling completely engrossed in his life saving mission. Then, after being struck a second time and with a bullet lodged in his thigh, he dragged himself over the battlefield and succeeded in treating 13 more men before his medical supplies ran out."



## *Navy Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class David Ray*

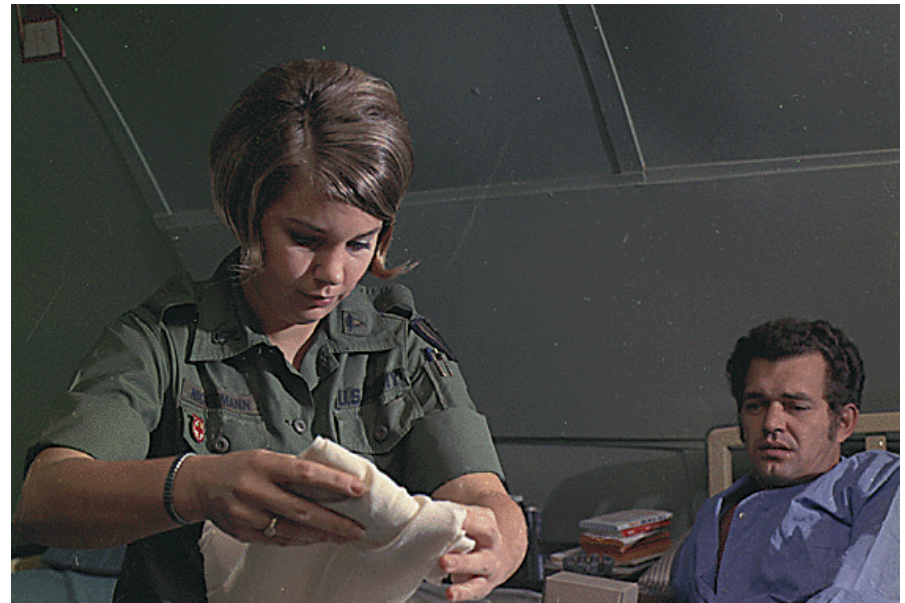
On March 19, 1969, a battalion-size enemy force managed to break through the barbed wire perimeter and attack the battery position at Phu Loc Six with assault rifles, flamethrowers and Chicom grenades. Ignoring the heavy rocket and mortar fire, Petty Officer 2nd Class David Ray, a Navy hospital corpsman, moved from position to position rendering aid to as many wounded men as possible before he was seriously injured. Refusing medical aid, Ray continued assisting casualties until he was attacked by two enemy soldiers. He killed one and wounded the other.



Although weakened by severe wounds, Ray continued to try to reach casualties and defend the position, helping the Marines hold off the enemy until he ran out of ammunition. In a final act of

heroism, Ray lost his life when he protected a wounded Marine from the impact of an exploding grenade. Lethal fragments of the grenade flew into Ray's body, immediately killing him.

Ray's citation reads, "Petty Officer Ray was faced with the intense fire of oncoming enemy troops and, despite the grave personal danger and insurmountable odds, succeeded in treating the wounded and holding off the enemy until he ran out of ammunition, at which time he sustained fatal wounds."



*Vietnam. 1st Lt. Elaine H. Niggemann changes a surgical dressing for Mr. James J. Torgelson at the 24th Evacuation Hospital. Mr. Torgelson is civilian employee for HNA, Inc., 1971*

In his remarks at a recent presentation of the Medal of Honor President Obama said, "Duty. Honor. Country. Service. Sacrifice. Heroism. These are words of weight. But as people – as a people and a culture, we often invoke them lightly. We toss them around freely. But do we really grasp the meaning of these values? Do we truly understand the nature of these virtues? To serve, and to sacrifice." Military medical professionals, and their brothers-in-arms throughout American history, knew and understood the meaning of these values. Their legacy continues through the work of professionals today, on the battlefield and off.



For more information about medical Medal of Honor recipients, visit the Military Health System Web site: [http://www.health.mil/About\\_MHS/MedalofHonor.aspx](http://www.health.mil/About_MHS/MedalofHonor.aspx)

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